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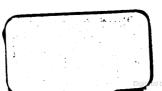
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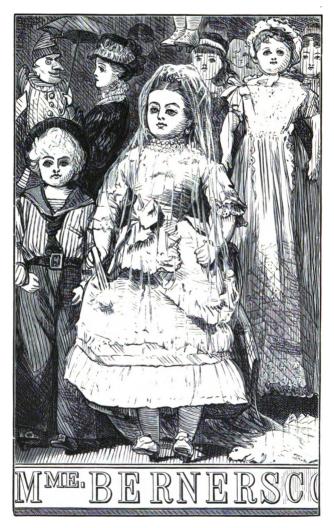
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MORE DOLLS



Front.

our show-case.—p. 7

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MORE DOLLS

BY

"AUNTIE BEE"

AUTHOR OF "ROSABELLA"



WITH FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS BY D. T. WHITE.

LONDON GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL

NEW YORK: 416, BROOME STREET

1879

2527 · # 25.
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR, ROSABELLA,

A DOLL'S CHRISTMAS STORY,

BY

"AUNTIE BEE."

With Illustrations by D, T. White,

Bedicated

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCESS OF WALES

BY SPECIAL PERMISSION.

LONDON: October, 1878.

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MORE DOLLS.

CHAPTER L

THE SHOW-CASE

In a long narrow house, the front of which was made of clear glass, five of us, dressed in our finest clothes, were seated—four other model dolls and I.

Madame Bernersconi, who with her clever fingers had modelled our wax faces and hands and feet, called our glass house her "show-case," and whenever she was asked to exhibit her prettiest dolls, it was always one of us she selected. Very tenderly would she lift us down, and, in her funny half-English half-French talk,

praise our sweet *lifelike* faces, and the fine clothes we were dressed in.

My dress was of white satin, a wreath of white flowers was fastened upon my curls. My shoes were white too, and an ivory fan hung at my side.

I suppose it was on account of this dress that I soon came to be called "the Bride."

Next to me in the show-case, safely propped up on a wire rest, was a round-faced, merry, pink-cheeked dolly, who always seemed to be smiling. She had short fair hair as soft as spun silk, and she wore a cap with a lace frill to it, and a long white gown trimmed with lace too. We called her "the Baby," and we all liked and petted the dear little plump thing.

We grown-up dolls sometimes quarrelled and said unkind words to one another, but we none of us were ever cross with "the Baby."

I don't think we should ever have been cross with anyone, if only we had been taken out and about now and then. But it really was not a happy life always to be shut up in a tight glass case, and have the door locked upon us all day and all night. Sometimes we got so impatient, we felt as if we really must break the windows or pull back the bolts or rattle at the locks.

If we could only make some noise, the people who lived above the shop might have heard us, and then surely they would have come to open the glass doors and set us free!

Oh, you happy girls and boys, who merrily walked past the shop-windows, or pulled at the arm of mamma, papa, or nurse, and begged to be allowed to wait awhile and have "a good look at the toys!" you little thought how badly we poor dolls used to wish we could come out and trot about like you, and stretch our cramped tired limbs, as you did too.

Some of you would stand staring at us and cry out "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "Lovely!"

The boys talked about the humming-tops, or the regiment of soldiers, or the Chinese puzzles, or the magic lanterns, or the omnibuses and carts, and hansom cabs and whips, all of which were set out in the windows facing the street; but the girls seemed only to care for the dolls, and were never tired of telling one another which they liked best, and talking about the different dresses, and wishing, and sometimes asking mamma or papa, to buy a particular one for next birthday, or, better still, to get it at once.

If mamma or papa stopped and looked, and perhaps really came into the shop, we dolls in the show-case were so anxious to know if our turn had come at last, and one of us was likely to be chosen and *sold*, and carried away to see the outside world, and to move about among the girls and boys that lived in it instead of only just watching them pass by our glass windows.

But often and often when we had been asked for, and were taken down out of the show-case, looked at and admired, the lady or gentleman walked away out of the shop, only saying, "Goodmorning, we will call again another day." Then we had to be put up in the old place again, and Madame Bernersconi gave us a twitch or a jerk with those strong clever fingers of hers as though to punish us for not having suited her customer.

Sometimes it happened that a lady came into the shop with several children, who each had some money of their own and were very anxious to spend it, and yet quite unable to decide what they would best like to buy for their sixpence, or their shilling, or sometimes for a much larger sum.

It was when the savings-boxes had been opened at Christmas-time that the little folks seemed to be very rich, and sometimes a little girl brought money enough to buy a wax doll, for which she had been saving up every farthing for a whole year past.

I think those little people who had been a long time thinking about what they wished to get, and who brought their own money to spend, seemed best pleased with their purchases, and generally managed to find just what they wanted.

Whereas those to whom mamma, or aunt, or some kind friend said, "You may choose what you like, dear," wanted everything, and were really pleased with nothing.

I have watched little children come into the shop and admire the very best toys, and ask for those at first, yet, finding they could not have those, they would gladly accept a rag-baby, or a Punch and Judy that had no body at all, only a hollow head and a long loose gown to cover the hand that made it move.

And I have seen the children hug one of these common dolls, and seem as pleased as if they had held one of us in their arms. Indeed, I am quite sure that the boys always preferred a Judy to one of us delicate ladylike dolls who lived in the show-case. But boys don't care for or understand us, as their little sisters very well know. Guns and boats and trains and hobbyhorses, and anything that makes a noise or can

be made a noise with—such as drums or trumpets or castanets or accordions—those are the things the boys prefer, aren't they?

For my part, I think little girls are much nicer and much wiser than their brothers, and all the dolls I have ever known think so too.

One day two very pretty ladies came into our shop. We were all sure that one of them was a mamma, she looked so gentle and motherlike, and gave quite a smile to our baby-doll, and said something about the baby to the younger lady, who nodded and smiled too. Perhaps she was the daughter of the other lady; but she could not have come to buy a doll for herself, for she wore long dresses, and her hair was done up in a knot, like our French doll's, about whom I have not been able to tell you anything as yet, though she was quite the most important of us all, for she was splendidly dressed in a costume of silk and velvet, and she wore pink silk stockings and high-heeled bronze boots.

Madame Bernersconi always called her

"coquette," which is, I suppose, a French name for a fashionable lady.

But before I tell you more about us dolls, you shall hear what that nice-looking lady and her daughter came to buy.

They had remarked the baby in the show-case, and after that they looked at all of us very attentively, and then the lady turned to Madame, and said:

"We want a handsome wax doll, something like this one," and she pointed to me!

Of course we all listened attentively, for we all felt quite sure that one of us would really be chosen at last.

But, oh! our hopes did not last long; for the young lady, seeing that Madame was about to unlock the show-case, stopped her, saying:

"No, not dressed, please. I intend to make the doll's clothes myself, as a Christmas surprise for my little sister."

Then our glass door was sharply closed upon us again, the key turned with a click, and we were left to look on while the long drawer from under our case was pulled forward and a number of dolls wrapped in tissue-paper were fetched out.

Among these the young lady chose one with a pretty wax face.

I saw that doll again some time after, as I shall have occasion to tell you by-and-by. She was then called Rosabella; very great care was taken of her, and she was much loved and petted by her kind little mother, Ethel Lee. But as Rosabella has had the chance of telling you all this in her own Christmas story, I will say nothing more about her at present.

I thought she was very fortunate that day when Mrs. Lee first bought her, and I heartily wished I had never been dressed as a bride, but left in the long drawer wrapped in tissue-paper, for then I might have had the chance of being chosen by Mary Lee and carried away in her kind arms, instead of being left in Madame Bernersconi's show-case, where I

was getting more and more discontented. And when I was lying in the drawer I had grumbled too, and wished to be taken out and dressed; and so I am afraid I was like the poor fisherman who wished to live in a palace, and when he got there did not like it, and wished himself back in his poor little cottage again, where he perhaps is living still; and, let us hope, will be happy ever after.

I hope none of you, my little friends, ever waste your time by being cross and grumbling, for it is quite as easy and much pleasanter to be cheerful and contented as our little sailor-boy always was, who lived in the show-case too, but, instead of being ill-tempered, seemed always quite ready to laugh and sing or dance a hornpipe, though he had to keep still behind the glass doors like the rest of us.

We big dolls all liked and admired this jolly sailor-boy. He looked so fresh and neat in his bright blue serge suit and his striped shirt with the large collar. He had a sailor's hat

on, too, which was stuck jauntily on one side of his curly yellow wig, and we used to call him the baby's brother, because he had just such another round merry face. I was so fond of the baby and the sailor that I was quite sorry to leave Madame Bernersconi, because I thought I should never be likely to see those two merry little faces again; but it so happened that when I met Rosabella, and Lolo, and Lalla Lee, I saw these old friends again, too, and in much happier days than those we had spent together in Madame Bernersconi's show-case.

B

CHAPTER II.

MY FIRST LITTLE MAMMA.

ONE afternoon a gentleman came into the shop and asked Madame Bernersconi to show him some of her best dolls.

I had scarcely looked at him when first he entered; but as soon as he spoke of *dolls* I became interested at once, and both looked and listened.

He was a tall elderly gentleman, with white hair and a white moustache.

He was very upright, and had a stern look, or so I thought, until I saw him smile, and then his whole face seemed to light up in the very pleasantest way. He seemed to know Madame Bernersconi, and asked her how she was getting

on in her business, and if the changeable weather caused her any inconvenience, and if the dolls had all been behaving themselves properly.

"There are some in that case," he added, "that should surely be out of the nursery by this time," and as he spoke he looked at us, and turning to Madame again, continued: "you must find me something particularly pretty to-day, Madame, as I mean to make a parting gift to my little Milly, to console her while I am away."

It was as he said this that bright smile came into his face and made him look so happy. I wondered if he could be Milly's papa, and, if so, why he looked so pleased at the thought of going away from her.

"I read something in the newspaper which, I suppose, is true then, General Steele?" said Madame, putting her head on one side, and looking up at the gentleman with a smile.

He nodded as though to say "Yes," and she added: "Will you permit that I offer you

mon humble compliment, and the same also to Madame the Générale that is to be?"

"Thank you," said the gentleman; and as he spoke he took out his watch, and made a step towards the shop-door. Madame seemed to think by this that he was in a hurry, and without waiting for another word she came over to our case, and lifting me out, presented me to the gentleman, saying:

"The dress is quite appropriate to this joyful occasion, sir, is it not?"

The General looked at me and smiled, and said: "Yes, that will do; very pretty, Madame; I am sure Miss Milly will be pleased with it. I will send the nurse down after dark this evening to fetch the doll, for I do not wish Milly to know anything about it until after I have left town." And without further conversation Milly's papa left the shop.

Soon after the shutters were put up in the evening, and when all the other dolls out of our case had been snugly tucked away in one of the drawers which we called our bed, the nurse came to fetch me, and while Madame was wrapping me up in a great sheet of cotton wool she asked all sorts of questions about the General's wedding, and how old the bride was, and how many bridesmaids there would be, and what they would be dressed in, and then Madame asked another question to which I anxiously waited to hear the answer.

"And what does Miss Milly say to all this?"

"Miss Milly is quite pleased, because she sees her pa so happy," said the nurse. "How that dear child does love her pa, to be sure; it's quite wonderful, and it always puts me in mind of her poor dear blessed ma. Miss Milly is so like her in all her looks and ways too. But Mrs. Steele that is to be, is very gentle and kind too, and I am thankful to say Miss Milly took to her from the first. It would have been a sad business else, but now—"

After this there was a great deal more talking, half of which I did not understand, and I was

very glad when at last nurse said, "But I really must be going;" and carefully tucking me under her shawl, she carried me away.

As my head was quite covered, I could not in the least see where I was being taken, but I felt that we were being driven, and as the carriage jolted a great deal, and often stopped very suddenly, I have since thought we went in an omnibus. At last we seemed to have reached home, for after a bell was rung, and a door shut. Nurse stood still for a minute, asked some questions about Miss Milly, and then walked up a great many steps, which seemed to have tired her, for she gave a great sigh as she threw off her shawl and sat down.

There was a shaded lamp on a work-table near a sewing-machine, a heap of clothes, and a basket with tapes and cottons; but except a frock and some stockings, no sign of Miss Milly, whom I was so anxious to see. I found afterwards that this was nurse's workroom.

Nurse, after tidying the things that lay upon

the table, suddenly took me up again; and after pinning the sheet of cotton-wool, in which Madame Bernersconi had wrapped me. closely about me, she laid me on a shelf in a large linen press, face downwards, and having locked the door took out the key, and so left me. I was now even worse off than in the show-case. for there were no other dolls near me, nor could I see the people passing, as I had been able to do in the shop. I now often wished myself back there again, and so I found out that we are sometimes discontented without cause, and wish for some change, which, when it comes, does not make us any happier. In those long dark days in the linen press, I made up my mind that if ever I got out of it I would never grumble again, but try to make the best of whatever home I should find myself in. And I hope my dear little readers will remember what I now found out for myself. Grumbling does no good, and a change is not always for the better. So it is best to be satisfied with what we have.

Certainly no doll was ever more delighted than I was when the door of the press was suddenly unlocked one morning, and I heard nurse's voice saying:

"Now look for yourself, Miss Milly, and see if you like your new playfellow."

In another moment Milly had taken me out, and holding me up in both hands, was looking into my face with the brightest eyes I have ever seen.

"Is this Beauty really for me, nurse?" she cried as if she could not believe that I was to belong to her.

"This letter will tell you, miss," said nurse, handing Milly a letter, which the little girl read very eagerly.

"Dear, dear father, how kind he is," she said, and she kissed the letter and laughed; and all the while two great tears were running ove her cheeks, which presently fell with a splash on to the paper she held in her hand.

"You darling dolly," she said, seating me on

her arm, and smiling at me through her tears, "you will think I am a very silly mamma to be laughing and crying all at once, but then you are a little stranger as yet; you will know all about me soon, dear, and then I can talk to you and tell you about dear, dear papa; he is your grandpapa, dolly, of course."

"I am really glad, Miss Milly," said nurse, "that you will have someone always ready to listen to your chatter now, while I am busy about other things."

"Yes, nurse, it is nice," answered Milly, "and my dolly will understand me much better than even you do, nurse, for I shall teach her everything I know and all I learn, don't you see?"

"I think the doll does, any way," said nurse,
"for she has been looking straight at you for
the last ten minutes, without even so much as
winking."

Milly laughed. "She has a dear, dear face," she said, as she kissed my head; "I quite love her already, but we seem a little strange as yet.

I feel as if she were only a visitor, and then I don't know what to call her."

"It's her fine clothes that make her seem strange to you, miss," said nurse; "you put her on one of her plain frocks, and lay the white one away in this pretty little chest of drawers your mamma told me to give you for the doll, with her best love."

"What, more presents!" cried Milly, kneeling down before the pretty little mahogany chest which had a hanging wardrobe above and three drawers below, and which contained "a whole trousseau of new clothes for me."

Milly took the things out one after another, and held them up for me to see. We certainly both had reason to be pleased, for everything was ready there that any doll or doll's mamma could desire to have.

"I shall put on this pretty blue flannel dressing-gown for you now, dolly," said Milly, when she had cleared out the chest and laid its contents carefully upon her bed; "and you

shall sit in this arm-chair and watch me while I put all your pretty new clothes back into their places, for I mean to teach you to be very, very neat, and to keep all your things nice, and that will be a pleasure for both of us, and please mamma and nursie too."

"This arm-chair belonged to a dear doll I had a long time ago," said Milly, seating me opposite to her while she finished arranging my clothes. "That dolly had a large china head; and once, when father called me, I ran downstairs very quickly, and I caught my foot in a loose stair-rod, and poor dolly was jerked out of my arms, and fell on to the marble floor of the hall, and—and—I have never had a dolly that I really loved since then."

Milly looked so sorrowful, I was afraid she would cry, but just then nurse came back into the room, and said:

"Well, Miss Milly, have you made up your mind what the doll's name is to be? Won't you call her May, like the china one?"

"Oh no! nurse," cried Milly; "why that would make me sorry every time I spoke to her, for I should always remember my poor dear old pet. Oh! who is that?" added Milly, as she heard a gentle tap at the door. Then a pleasant voice asked:

"May I come in?" And in another moment a laughing, happy-looking girl had caught my new mamma in her arms, was hugging and kissing her, called her by all sorts of endearing names, and then said: "Let me show you what I have brought for you, Milly." As she spoke, she held up a bunch of flowers. "These are our very first violets," she added; "they have come out overnight in a very sheltered corner. Mamma said yours were always later than ours, so I brought you these, as I know you love them; you are much later than we are, certainly, for I see you have scarcely any daisies on your lawn, and our meadow is covered with them."

"You are like a good fairy, May," said Milly, clapping her hands; "you came in just as I

was wishing, and brought me the help I wanted too."

"What, these flowers?" asked May, astonished.

"Not only those, but a name for my beautiful new doll. I called my poor china one after you, and now you have given me a pretty name for this one too, for you talked about violets and daisies, and what could be prettier than one of those names for my dear dolly? You shall decide which it is to be."

"Daisy," said May, quickly, "and for the very first party she goes to I will make her a wreath of daisies, and trim a white dress with them too, for mamma gave me a great many the other day, which she took off one of her bonnets; they were made in Paris, they have little pink tips, and they look like real ones."

"Oh! that will be lovely!" cried Milly. "Thank you so much, dear May, and now you must let me show you all my little Daisy's pretty new clothes; just look here."

. "First I must give you mamma's message,

Milly," said May; "what with the doll and her name, I had almost forgotten what I came for, and mamma wishes me to take back your answer at once. Our cousin, Harry Lee, has just had the measles; so of course he had to leave school, and is going to stay at Hillport with us for a fortnight. Then he will be able to go back again. We have all had measles, and so have you; don't you remember how we played that our dolls had caught them from us?"

"Yes, what fun we had, May," said Milly, laughing.

"We are going to have just as much fun again, Milly," said May, "for mamma sent me over to say that she wants you to be ready at ten o'clock to-morrow morning, for she is going to drive over herself to fetch you, and you are going to stay with us; won't that be nice? Of course Daisy will come too, and I will ask Nora to help me with her new dress, and we can set about it at once."

"I should so much like to come, dear," said Milly, "but nurse could not let me go without——"

"Without leave? of course not, but we have got leave. Mamma wrote to the General to ask him, as soon as it was settled, that you should stay here while they went abroad, and he said it should be just as you pleased, and you should decide for yourself as soon as he was gone."

Milly seemed delighted at the idea of this visit to her friend, and a great part of our time was occupied in settling what should be packed up and carried to Hillport the next day.

CHAPTER III.

MILLY AND I GET ON VERY WELL.

AFTER May had gone away, Milly took me into the garden and showed me the part which had been given to her as her very own, and of this she alone had to take care. She had a nice set of tools, which she kept in a corner of the conservatory, and there her pretty little dark green watering-pot and her wheelbarrow stood, and a number of small flower-pots with slips of geranium and other plants ready for bedding-out.

"The very first warm sunny morning, nurse has promised I shall come and work again," said Milly, "but it has been much too cold for out-of-door pleasures lately. When I do go out you will come too, Daisy, won't you, dear? and I shall clean out the wheelbarrow and put a shawl in it, and then you can lie in it quite close to where your mammy is at work; you'll like that, won't you? and if I find either violets or daisies you shall have them, of course."

Milly told me she had already sown mignonette seed and sweet-peas, and mustard and cress and convolvulus, and how she had used one part of her bed for a kitchen garden, and that last year she had beans, potatoes, and rhubarb in it, and hoped to get all these vegetables again this spring.

"It is such fun, you know, Daisy," my little mamma went on chatting to me; "for whenever I have enough for a dish fit to put on the table papa likes to have it for his dinner, and then I am allowed to come down on those evenings and dine with him, and now I shall get leave to bring you down too; so you see I must take the very greatest care of my garden,

and water and tend my plants every day, because dear papa is so pleased when he sees it looking nice, and the little wee green leaves begin to peep out of the brown earth. Sometimes I fancy they are tiny babies' heads just trying to look out from under a warm counterpane, and when Jack Frost comes and nips their poor little tiny faces. I feel so sorry; it seems as though he had come and whipped them for peeping out before the kind sun was there ready to look after them and keep them warm. When the sun does shine, and everything is glad and bright, the baby seeds come out so quickly again, and seem quite pleased to grow taller and stronger every day; and then I think the sun is like a good kind nurse to the young plants, making them warm and comfortable and happy: and when the April showers come I fancy their nurse is washing them, or giving them a nice draught of water to drink, for which I am sure they must be wishing after all this gritty March dust has been blown upon their dainty green faces."

Milly was wheeling me about in a perambulator all the time she was talking to me, and we went through all the large flower and kitchen gardens, and Milly stopped and asked the gardener some questions about her seeds; and we went on again, and I saw the swing and the arbour. where we should have tea on fine summer evenings, Milly said; and "Oh Daisy!" she went on, "you can't think how lovely the flower-beds will look then, and the shrubbery which is so black and dreary now will be covered with thick green leaves, and we shall be just as glad to creep into it to be shaded from the hot sun, as we are now to get away from this cold, cold wind."

It was indeed a cold wind that came blowing in great gusts round every corner, and made Milly wrap herself and me very closely in the warm shawl nurse had tied around her.

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When we went indoors again Milly showed me her schoolroom, where all her books were set up in a neat case, and Milly opened the piano and played a pretty tune, and told me she loved music better than any of her other lessons; and she told me about Miss Day, her governess, who came to teach her twice a week, and went to Aunt Ada's the other mornings.

"Aunt Ada is the mother of Mabel, and Nora, and Kate," said Milly, "and of cousin Frank, too. You will see them all to-morrow, Daisy, but I hope you will always love May the best, because she is your godmamma, you know, and she is my very dearest friend, besides being my favourite cousin. And now we will go back and talk to nurse a bit, Daisy dear," said Milly, when she had taken me into all the rooms in the house; "poor nurse will feel very lonely when we are gone, I know; for though she is a little cross sometimes, she is so good really, and I daresay she will cry when we have gone away to-morrow; for nurse knew my own dear mother,

Daisy, and she was so good; and dear nurse often tells me she loves me for her sake. I never knew her, Daisy, and perhaps that is why I don't quite know how I ought to talk to you, and take care of you properly; but you know I love you very much, and perhaps my new mamma will teach me all the rest when she comes home."

Every minute that I spent with Milly made me love her more and more. I thought she was the dearest little girl I had ever heard of, and I felt very happy to think that I had been given to her, and that she seemed so pleased with me.

About eight o'clock, Milly undressed me and we went to bed together; nurse turned the lamp low so that we should go to sleep, but Milly kept whispering to me a long time while nurse was stitch, stitch, stitching, until her supperbell rang, when she got up quickly, and saying, "Good-night, my dear, make haste and go to sleep," left the room.

But Milly had not half done telling me about Hillport yet, and about the many pleasant visits she had paid there, and about Mabel's mamma, who was General Steele's sister-inlaw and own sister of Mr. Lee, the father of Ethel and Harry and the twins, of whom Rosabella has told you so much in her Christmas story. Milly told me about Mary Lee, too. whom I had seen in our shop; "I used to love her next best after papa," said Milly. She is not a little girl, you know, Daisy, but quite a grown-up young lady, and she is so nice. now I am going to try and love my new mamma next best after dear father, because I know he wishes me to do so, and mamma is very gentle and kind-she will be good to you and me, too, Daisy darling; why, you will be her little granddaughter, don't you see? And we two will do all we can to please her, won't we? We will be good and attentive to our lessons, and learn to be very tidy about our books and our toys and our clothes.



"Oh! don't part us, Nursie, please, please!"-p. 39

I am so glad I have learnt to dress myself, Daisy, because, now I have you to look after, we should never be ready in time for breakfast if I had to wait for nurse. Besides, poor nurse couldn't manage to do much for me, for she is to help mamma in the morning now, and so I don't want to trouble her at all, but will give all my time to you."

While Milly was still whispering to me, nurse came softly back into the room.

"Not asleep yet, Miss Milly?" she said in rather a cross tone. "What does this mean? I believe you are actually talking to that doll of yours still, and so I must take her away at once and lay her somewhere else."

In an instant Milly was out of bed, and standing on the tips of her bare toes, put her arms up around nurse's neck.

"I'll promise you I'll go to sleep this very minute, dear, dear nursie," she said; "and so will Daisy, too, and not another word will we say; but, oh! don't part us, please, please!"

I could just see them both from the bed where I was lying, and I felt quite sure that nurse could not refuse that dear little beseeching mother of mine. Her face was lifted up, her brown curls fell in a thick cluster over her neck, and her eyes were shining like two stars, all the brighter perhaps because tears stood in them.

"It's very hard to say 'no' to you, Miss Milly," said nurse, smiling, "and somehow you have never let me get used to refusing you anything; you're so ready at coaxing, bless you! But, what's better than coaxing, you know how to be a good child, and no one ever need say a sharp word to you, that's very sure. There, jump back into bed, little lady, and may God bless and keep you to prove a blessing to those who I do hope and believe mean to deserve such."

Neither Milly nor I quite understood what these last words of nurse's meant, but that did not matter, for we were both quite aware that we had leave to be together again, and in a very

MILLY AND I GET ON VERY WELL. 41

few minutes we were both sound asleep, nurse having first laid my face against a pillow, so that my little mother's should not bruise me if she moved in her sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

WE GO TO HILLPORT.

THE cuckoo-clock that hung in the hall had only just sung out "Cuckoo" twice next morning when Milly said: "That's half-past nine, Daisy, and as I am quite ready, I shall have half an hour to dress you, darling, for Aunt Ada is sure to be here exactly at ten. I shall put on your sealskin jacket for you, dear," continued my kind little mamma, "and you must wear your quilted hood, for Aunt Ada drives so fast that the wind will seem to cut our faces like a knife as we go rush through it, and it is so cold, but you shall snoozle up quite close to me, won't you, Daisy dear? and then you won't feel the

wind a bit. It's nice for you to have a loving mamma to take care of you and cuddle you and keep you warm, isn't it, my little pet o' pets?"

We were standing out on the gravel-drive waiting when, exactly at ten o'clock, Aunt Ada drove her ponies in at the lower gate.

"Why you must be frozen, my poor child!" cried Mrs. Steele, in that cheery voice of hers that sounded so like Mabel's, only there was more of it.

"Jump in and give Miss Dolly to nurse for a minute, and then she can hand her to you when you are seated. My ponies are impatient. They feel the cold this morning too, and long to be trotting, as you and I do, for the sake of getting warm. While they walk up Hanger Hill, by-and-by, we'll run, won't we, and leave Miss Dolly to mind the rugs, eh?"

We were soon rushing along at a great pace, the ponies stepped out very briskly, and the bells on their harness jingled quite a pretty tune as they went along. Milly kept me so closely tucked away under her jacket that I could see nothing of the road we were driving along, but she and Aunt Ada kept up a very lively conversation, and so I heard something about the plans which Mabel and her sisters had made for their cousin's amusement while we were all staying at Hillport together. Suddenly Aunt Ada drew up quite sharply.

"Good gracious! you little rogue, how you did frighten us!" she cried, and Milly had given a little scream too.

I could not think what had happened, being covered up in my little mother's wraps.

"Why, Aunt Ada!" shouted a merry voice, "you don't mean to say that you were frightened too? I'd believe anything of the girls, they always are such muffs, but I thought you had pluck enough for a real sailor."

"I have had a narrow escape of making a very poor one of you, Master Harry, pluck or no pluck," said Aunt Ada; but though she tried to laugh her voice trembled, and I knew she must have been very much frightened.

"Do you know that the ponies were almost upon you, my boy?" she asked presently.

"Oh, almost is as good as a mile," he cried with his saucy voice; "I heard papa say so once when the horses almost ran away with the waggonette while we were all in it, the babies—two poor mites—and the dear mother was so frightened, and she turned so pale, just as you did just now, aunt, when I rushed out of the hedge."

"I turn pale, and on your account, you saucy rogue? Why, you're not worth so much emotion."

"That I know nothing about," said Harry; "emotions are womanly sort of stuff, like cryings and faintings and all that rubbish; a boy can't be expected to understand such things."

"But you can and will understand, Master Harry," said Aunt Ada, very sternly, "that while you are in my care I will have none of these tricks. I am responsible to your dear parents for your well-being and safety, and I tell you plainly that I object to your running into danger like this. And if I find you doing so again I have done with you, and shall pack up your boxes and send you off at a minute's notice. You know I always keep my word, Harry, so now you can please yourself."

All this time the ponies had been standing. I suppose Harry was now standing on the step of the chaise, for his voice sounded very close as he bent over and said in a low tone:

"I am awfully sorry I vexed you, Aunt Ada, and indeed I'll try to be more careful for everybody's sake. I'll try for that, and I can promise you, aunt, that I'll never get in front of your ponies again. I didn't start meaning any harm, really; I knew you and Milly would be sure to walk up Hanger Hill together, so I thought I'd come and meet you, and walk along with you, and get a chance of a talk with Milly before the girls get hold of her; but now I have met

her she hasn't even said good-day to me. Why, Milly, don't you remember what pals we were last summer? What a lot of fun we had?"

"And so you will again," said Aunt Ada, "but poor little Milly was really frightened, and has not quite got over it yet. She is not used to your rough-and-ready ways, you know, Harry."

"Poor little Mill," said Harry. "Come, be friends. Shake hands with a fellow, won't you? Why, what in the world are you hugging up under your cloak? Oh, I know!" he shouted in his usual merry tone. "Aunt, I declare she's got a ferret in her arms. Out with it, Mill. Well, I didn't believe you were such a good fellow as that. It really is one, aunt. You needn't laugh; I can feel his coat. Won't Frank be pleased! we were talking about ferrets last night."

"Mind you don't get bitten, Master Harry," said Aunt Ada, laughing, and laughed the more as she saw Harry's face, which I also could

peep at now, for he had pulled Milly's jacket open, anxious to see the ferret, and now found—

me!

"Oh! I declare, you've got a Rosabella too now, Mill!" he cried in his disappointment. "As if one wax monkey in the family wasn't enough. Why, I get more worry out of that silly old doll of Effie's at home than out of the twins and the rest of the nursery all put together."

"You mean that you worry poor Ethel and her Rosabella more than all the other children do—isn't that so, Harry?"

He laughed. "I daresay you know best, auntie," he said, and uncovering my face, he added: "What's your creature's name, Mill? Dulcinella, or some such gibberish, eh?"

"I call her Daisy," said my little mother, and I saw her cheeks getting very red, as she bent over me, and held me closer than ever.

"I'd choose to be a daisy if I might be a flower," sang Harry, at the top of his voice.

"Jump in and sit still, Harry," said Aunt

Ada; "you're astonishing all the villagers with your shouts as it is; now then, hold fast, for we're off."

"Isn't this jolly?" cried Harry, delighted at the ponies' pace. "Couldn't you let me drive just for one mile, auntie dear?"

"No, Master Quicksilver; certainly not, while we have two delicate little ladies in the carriage. Some day you and I will take a turn alone, and then I will give you a proper lesson in handling the 'ribbons,' as the old coachmen call the reins."

"Mind, aunt, that's a promise!" cried Harry;
"and I shall take care to remind you of it too,
and I will pay such attention to all you tell
me; and one of these fine days I'll take the
reins from papa, and oh! won't he be astonished
when he finds I can drive? You couldn't give
me a greater pleasure than to teach me that,
aunt."

"You could give me a small one, you restless little fellow, by keeping still for five minutes;

you hop up and down like a live Jack in the box."

"Jack out of the box, I think, auntie," said my little mamma, smiling, and Harry shouted:

"Oh! that's good, that is."

"Harry, don't shout so," said Aunt Ada, trying to look cross, but not succeeding; and presently she added: "When we reach the bottom of the hill we will all jump out, and you shall run some of your nonsense off if you can. I'll carry Miss Daisy, and Milly and you shall race, but Milly must have a good start of course."

All these stoppages—the walk up the long hill, and the children's race, which Harry won in spite of Milly's start—tended to pass the time away, and as we drove through the gates of Hillport Manor a great bell was ringing, and Aunt Ada said: "Why it's assuredly half-

twelve, children, so you have only half an hour to get ready for luncheon, Milly; but the girls will all help you, their lessons are just over; here comes Mabel to answer for herself."

"Oh, mother!" cried Mabel, "you have been away such a long while, I really thought something must have happened to you. Let me help you out, Milly dear. Why how in the world did you get into the carriage, Harry?" she added in surprise, as she saw her cousin. "Frank has been to the schoolroom-door a dozen times to ask if you were there, and went away quite unhappy because he could not find you."

"Has Frank been interfering with your lessons, Mabel?" asked her mother, sharply.

"Oh no! Miss Day never allows him to do that; he must not come into the room while she is there."

"I am glad to hear that," said Mrs. Steele; "and where is Frank idling now?"

"He is quite lost without Harry, mamma

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but now he is consoling himself with a book of engineer's drawings Uncle Lee sent over for him this morning."

"Has anyone been from home then?" cried Harry, as he entered the hall.

May; "but there is a letter for you in the rack near the door."

"Who is it from?" asked Harry, to whom a letter did not seem as pleasant a surprise as it did to some little girls and boys I have known.

"It's from Mary," said Mabel, "and I want you to come and read it, because I hope to hear that she is coming over to see us soon."

"You read it for me, May, there's a dear," said Harry; "I haven't time just now, for Frank and I mean to go fishing directly after luncheon, and I must see to the tackle now; letters will keep, but fish are apt to swim away, you know."

"They're certainly not likely to sit still on

such a cold day as this," said Aunt Ada, pulling off her driving-gloves as she, too, entered the hall. "I think I can safely promise to give you sixpence apiece for every fish you bring in while this east wind is blowing," she added, laughing, while Harry, shouting, "Frank, where are you?" ran off to tell him the good news.

Mabel had been standing with her arm around my little mother and me, and now led us upstairs and showed us our room, which was between hers and her mother's; indeed, it was Aunt Ada's dressing-room, in which a small bed had been placed for us.

Nora and Kate came in presently and told Milly they liked me, and wished Ethel Lee could come and bring Rosabella, as that would complete the party.

When we went down into the dining-room, Aunt Ada told Mabel to put me away from the table in an arm-chair.

"Not because I doubt your child's behaving properly, Milly, but only because poor Effie's Rosabella once had a bad accident, by being knocked over at dinner-time."

I did not quite like sitting away from my dear little mamma, but I could see all the happy faces around the dinner-table; and I liked to listen to the talking, and I quite made up my mind that Milly was the dearest little girl in the room, and that I liked her better than her cousins—yes, better than Mabel even, although she was very nice.

In the afternoon we all went to sit with Aunt Ada in her workroom, and while her cousins were occupied with different kinds of needlework Milly read aloud, and they were all very quiet and attentive.

"What a blessing it is those boys are out of the way this afternoon," said Kate, who was rather prim in her looks and ways.

"How are we going to amuse them this evening?" asked Aunt Ada.

"Uncle Lee has sent us a new round game, called 'Snap,'" said Mabel; "I have not told

the boys about it yet, and so they will be pleasantly surprised when they begin to ask, 'Oh, what shall we do?' as usual."

Mabel had been imitating her brother Frank's voice, and just then we heard both Frank and Harry talking very eagerly as they ran across the hall, and presently they had entered the workroom, looking very flushed and very untidy.

"Oh, Aunt Ada, such larks!" cried Harry.
"You owe us three-and-sixpence, look! Oh, shall I turn the lot out on the carpet?" he added, holding up a fishing-basket and beginning to open the lid.

"Certainly not, you madcap!" said Aunt Ada, while Kate began to scream at the idea of seeing the fish.

"Oh, poor little beauties!" cried Milly, kneeling and peeping into the basket which Frank had just placed on the floor. "What pretty silvery creatures; oh, it does seem cruel to take them out of the water; won't you let me put them back into the river, Frank?"

"No, Milly, I can't let you do that!" said Frank, who was tall and thin, and did not quite know what to do with his long legs, which always seemed to be getting in his way instead of helping him along, as Harry's sturdy short ones did.

Milly looked quite sorry about the poor little fish, which were floundering about in the basket, until Frank said:

"I'll tell you what we'll do for you, Milly. Harry and I will get mother to let us have one of her high glass fern-covers—they make capital bowls, you know, turned upside down—and we'll put some shells, pebbles, and fossils in it, and some chickweed and stuff, and all the minnows we can catch for you, and it shall be your very own aquarium; you'll like that, won't you?"

"Oh, indeed I shall! how kind of you, Cousin Frank; and can I take it home, do you think?"

"Oh, mother will manage that for you if it's worth the taking, and you will have to see to

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t yourself, and change the water very often or else the fish are sure to die."

"Oh, I'll take as much care of them as I do of Daisy almost," said Milly; and then she came over to the chair where I was sitting, and took me up and showed me to Frank.

"She is a beauty," he said, and Harry cried:

"Put her into your aquarium, Mill; she'll do for a—a—— What do you call those fish with golden hair that sing to the sailors?"

"Do you mean mermaids?" asked Mabel, laughing.

"Yes; or sharks, or something wild of that sort," replied Harry in his saucy tone, and all his cousins laughed.

"I know a story about a little mermaid," said Milly.

"Oh, tell it us!" cried the girls.

"You don't want us to listen to that sort of stuff, do you, Aunt Ada?" asked Harry.

"No; but I want you to make haste and take your fish away, give the perch to cook, and put the small fry into our pond. Run off, boys, until the tea-bell rings. Now that we can be quiet again, let us hear your story, Milly, my dear," said Aunt Ada.

"I heard it some time ago," explained Milly, "and I don't quite remember it, but I will tell it as well as I can."

CHAPTER V.

MILLY TELLS THE STORY OF THE TINY MERMAID.

"ONCE upon a time a tiny little mermaid lived down at the bottom of the deep blue sea. She had twelve sisters, and they were all bold big creatures with staring eyes and fat cheeks, and a great deal of red weedy hair, but Tiny was very small and very delicate. She had soft brown eyes and silky fair hair, so fair and silky that it felt like spun silk.

Her sisters spoke and sang loudly, but Tiny's voice was so sweet and low, that when she went up and floated on the top of the sea at night, those who heard her thought her singing was only the murmuring of the shells, or the soughing of the wind that passed so gently over the water and hardly ruffled its smooth face. Tiny's rough noisy sisters laughed at the poor little mite, and made fun of her. Their father was an old sea-king. His knobbly head was covered with brown slippery seaweed, that hung all over his face in knots and tangles, and with little brown balls to it, such as we all like to pop when we find them on the beach at Ramsgate or Broadstairs. The sea-king used to roar at his red-headed daughters, and if they did not come when he called he would rush after them to catch them, and that made such a stir in the water that the waves above broke into foam and dashed up so high before they reached the land. Then the sea-king's voice seemed to be heard roaring even on the beach and in the houses up on the cliff. But the old monster was never rough with Tiny, and he used to like her to sit on his shoulder and chant her soft whispering shell-song into his ear, and when the weeds got into his eyes he would bid her put her little



"She only just peeped out of the shelter of her Futher's tangled hair."—p. 61

pink-tipped fingers into them to fetch the weed out for him, and sometimes when he swam up to the top of the sea he would carry her with him, and she would sit on his head and hold fast by the popweed that was his hair.

"The sister-mermaids used to float about above every night. They were quite able to take care of themselves, and needed no one to look after them, and as soon as a vessel lay at anchor, they would swim towards it and sing their loud songs and talk to and laugh at the sailors as they looked overboard and wondered at these strange creatures, and talked to and laughed at them turn.

"But Tiny never went about alone, nor did she speak to anyone, but she only just peeped out of the shelter of her old father's tangled hair, to see what the sailors looked like, and then she hid herself again quickly, for some of those men had redder faces and louder voices than her sisters, and they frightened her. One quiet moonlight evening, when the sea was very calm

and all was peaceful, quiet, and beautiful, Tiny, seated on the sea-king's head, was carried above and saw a very pretty little vessel; its sails looked like silver in the moonlight, they glistened so, and the gentle south wind was only just enough to fill them and send the yacht quietly along.

"Tiny looked eagerly—she had never seen such a pretty vessel before; it seemed like a toy after the great black hulls that mostly passed that way, and which were called 'men-of-war. This yacht carried a pretty snow-white flag with a red cross upon it, at the stern, and from its slender tapering mast a snow-white pennant floated. A little girl was looking up at this who stood upon the deck of the vessel.

"Tiny saw the little girl and tried to sing for her to hear, and the night was so quiet that even Tiny's gentle voice could be heard, and the little girl ran to the side of the yacht and looked over into the sea, and saw that fairylike Tiny sitting in what looked like a tangle of floating weeds. "The little girl called to her father to come and look. He was the captain of the yacht, but he was in the cabin below and did not hear his daughter. Meanwhile Tiny kept looking up at the little girl's sweet face, and seeing it smile at her she waved her wee pink-tipped hands and beckoned and sang:

"Oh! come with me,
Oh! come with me,
Down into the deep blue sea;
And there you shall hear
The stories shells tell,
And see all the wonders
Of ocean as well;
And all day long you'll play with me,
With weeds for your hair
And scales on your feet,
So the merriest mermaids we'll be;
Then come with me;
Oh! come with me.

"The little girl was leaning more and more over the side of the vessel, trying to hear what Tiny was singing. Presently she climbed on to stool so that she could bend over farther, and then she waved her hands to Tiny. All at once the stool slipped from under her feet, she fell over and went down, down, down, through the dark cold water; and the sea-king quickly rushed after her—he pounced upon her and carried her deeper and deeper still. Tiny clung closer and closer to his weed-hair; she longed to reach the bottom of the sea now, so that she might play there with the little girl who had such a pretty face, and who had smiled so sweetly at her.

"But when the little stranger arrived in the seaking's palace she would not smile at all, but began to cry bitterly, and instead of being pleased with poor little Tiny, she said she never would play with her, for she wanted to go back again to her own people, who had not tails but feet to walk on, and who all loved her and would be sorry to lose her.

"Tiny did not care a bit about those people, but she was dreadfully sorry to see her little visitor so sad, and very disappointed too that the little girl would neither smile nor play. At last Tiny fretted too, and looked quite sad. Then the old sea-king was very angry. He roared and blustered, and said it was all that little stranger's fault, for that since she had been below the sea, Tiny did nothing but fret and complain, so he meant to take the land-child back again to the top of the sea, and let her own friends take care of her there.

"When the land-child heard this she began to laugh, and was very gay, and danced about on her two feet, and Tiny thought she would like to be able to do so too; but little mermaids who have tails can't dance upon them, they can only swim.

"'To-morrow I am going home—to-morrow I am going home!' cried little Ella, the land-child, as she was dancing for glee.

"'But to-night you will sleep with me in my coral cave, Ella,' said Tiny, 'and I will sing you to sleep so softly.'

"Presently Ella and Tiny lay down on a bed

of sea-moss, and Tiny wound her wee arms about Ella's neck, and put her lips close to Ella's ear and sang to her so gently, so gently, that Ella soon fell sound asleep, and then she dreamt that she was on the deck of the yacht again, and that her father was standing beside her, saying: 'Wake up, my darling, you are a very lazy little sailor this morning.' Then she fancied the warm bright sun was shining upon her, and warming her limbs, which had become cramped and stiff by being so long in the cold dark sea, and with a sigh she opened her eves. but quickly covered them with her hands again. for the sun was shining and dazzled her, so that she could not even look at her father. It was no dream at all, it was really his voice that spoke to her, and she was really lying on the deck of the yacht, which was gliding gently along over the calm surface of the sea. When Ella was quite sure that she was awake she looked about her, and by her side she saw a rose-coloured, twisted, beautiful shell, such as

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she had never seen before, and when she lifted it to her ear it seemed to sing to her, poor little Tiny's song—'Oh, come to me.'

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"Then Ella jumped up and ran to her father, and said: 'I dreamt I leant over the side of the ship last night and that I fell right in, and I'll be very careful now never to lean over so far again, but do as you bid me always, for I don't want to see that horrid old sea-king ever again.'

"And that's the end of my story," said Milly.

"And where did you read it?" asked Aunt
Ada.

"I never read it anywhere, but I thought you might laugh if I told you that the large rose-coloured shell you once gave me, and which you said came from India, seemed to tell me all about Tiny, as it was whispering in my ear one summer evening ever so long ago."

"Well, after that we shall all be prepared to

hear that Miss Daisy tells you pretty stories, too," said Mabel.

"And so she does often," said Milly; "and some day I shall tell them to Auntie Bee and get her to write them down for me, as she did for Cousin Ethel's Rosabella."

"Oh, what shall we do?" said Frank and Harry, as they noisily re-entered the room.

"Have tea at present," said Aunt Ada, "and after that Mabel is going to show you a new game called 'Snap,' and I will join you when you are settled around the dining-room table."

CHAPTER VI.

HARRY LIKES THE STORY OF A TADPOLE.

I SOON found out that my dear little mamma was very fond of telling stories, and I am sure if Auntie Bee were to write down half the tales that Milly told me at one time and another, they would fill a much larger book than this one is.

I don't know whether or not Harry and Frank had managed to hear any part of the mermaid's story, or whether Mabel had told them how pretty she thought it, but certain it is that after the day when they went out fishing they were always asking Milly "to make up" a story for them to hear.

Milly was always very shy when the boys were about, and I think their rough words and wavs made her feel timid, but one day when Frank and Harry came in after they had been "muddling about" in the pond, by which I suppose they meant walking in the mud, they shouted for Milly and told her they had something "most awfully jolly to give her for her aquarium," and Frank very carefully showed her the contents of a small tin pail in which half-a-dozen sticklebacks were swimming, and a tiny tadpole, the very funniest little stonecoloured live indiarubber ball I had ever seen: it jumped and it jerked in the most absurd way, and when the boys turned it out into a shallow pan of water so that we could all watch it, the girls and Aunt Ada herself laughed as I had never heard them laugh before.

"That's for you, Milly," the boys told her; "you are to have it for your new aquarium if—there is an *if*, you see—if you make up a story and tell it us to-morrow."

"That is quite a fair bargain, Milly," said Aunt Ada. "Now, as I like your stories, too, I shall invite you all to have an early tea with me in my workroom to-morrow afternoon, and I shall then expect Milly to tell us a story that will please us very much, and after tea Frank shall bring the fern-shade in, and we will put some fossils and bits of rock into it, and weeds and mosses too, and—if Milly has told us her story—the tadpole himself."

Everyone seemed quite ready to agree to this kind proposal of Aunt Ada's, but though Milly had said "yes" with the rest, I noticed that she grew very silent directly after, and soon took an opportunity of following her aunt out of the room and into the garden.

"I want to ask you a favour, auntie dear," said Milly, taking hold of Mrs. Steele's dress as she was stooping over a flower-bed.

"Well, little lady, what is it?" asked Aunt Ada, looking up with a smile. "I don't mind promising my modest little Milly that I will do whatever she chooses to ask me for, she is such a very reasonable little person."

"I want to tell the boys a story about a tadpole to-morrow," said Milly, "and father once said to me: 'never talk about things you don't know about, for that's stupid for those who listen, and proves the stupidity of those who talk.' Now I particularly want to talk about tadpoles, and as I know nothing about them, except that they are the very funniest creatures I have ever seen, I want you, auntie dear, to tell me something about them—what they live on, what they do, and all that; and then I think I could make up a little story about one of them, and the boys will not think me stupid, because I shall be talking of things I really understand."

"I think your idea is very reasonable, my dear Milly," said Aunt Ada, kindly, "and it gives me the chance of improving myself too; for, to tell you the truth, I know no more about tadpoles than you do. But so that the boys shall

on no account have the chance of laughing at us, I shall get down a volume of Natural History from one of the library shelves to-night, and learn as much as I can of the nature and habits of these funny creatures; then to-morrow morning, directly after breakfast, or better still, before the others are down, you come to me in my room, and I will try and teach you all I read to-night; and then you and Daisy can go into the garden for an hour to take your morning walk, and you can think over and talk to your dolly about the story we shall all enjoy in the afternoon. You will be surprised to find how nicely you can tell it to us, if you have made Daisy hear it all through first."

"I will do just as you tell me, dear auntie," said Milly. "I thank you very much for all the trouble you are going to take for me."

Milly was up and dressed next morning, while Mabel was still sound asleep; and I was laid back upon the pillow, and left there alone, while Milly, I suppose, went to get her infor-

mation from Aunt Ada. She certainly had learnt all about tadpoles, and she told me a very interesting story as we walked in the garden after breakfast; only sometimes when I most wished to know what happened next, Milly would stop to say, "Do you think it will be best to tell it this way, or shall I say nothing about that?" etc.; and so I was not sure how the story really would turn out in the afternoon; but Milly seemed quite satisfied, and when we were all seated cosily in Aunt Ada's room, even the boys being very quiet, and both occupied in carefully cutting out some black figures, which they called shadow pictures, Mrs. Steele said: "Now, Milly, let us hear the story." My little mother began her tale, and told it so glibly it sounded as though she were reading aloud.

"Once upon a time, in an old pond, so full of weeds and lily-stems that the water looked very muddy and dark, there lived a young tadpole, such a restless wiggly-waggly tadpole that he worried the fat old water-rats dreadfully with his fidgety ways, and his own relations the frogs were often very cross with him, and croaked and quacked at him, trying to scold him into being quieter and better behaved; but it was all no use; quack, quack croaked the frogs, making quite as loud a noise as the ducks, of whom they really were afraid, and wigglewaggle went the lively tadpole, flourishing its funny little tail about, and not minding in the least whom it knocked against, or who was startled by his sudden jumps and twists and twirls. The fact was that this tadpole was so very proud of that fine tail of his that he would not keep still, because then he could not have shown off to others what he so much admired himself.

"One fine summer evening, Mr. Taddy, feeling quite tired with all the wiggling and waggling he had been doing that long hot day, sat himself down to rest in the lap of a bright yellow water-

lily, that was lying quietly in a bed of its broad green leaves, and looked very peaceful and content.

"'Oh.' thought Taddy, 'that yellow blossom looks like a dainty satin cushion; I am sure it is finer than any I have ever seen in the pleasure-boats, when I have sat on the big swan's back, and he has waddled away to the river, and taken me for a swim without knowing that I was there at all. Then I have been able to peep into the pretty boats as we sailed along together, and I have seen red cushions and green ones and blue ones, but never such a pretty one as that lily, in which I shall now take my seat.' So saying, Master Taddy gave a jerk and a spring, and plumped right down in the middle of that dainty yellow cushion, which sank down under the water for a minute with the sudden weight that fell upon it. But its stem was not broken, only bent, and presently Lily and Taddy were both afloat again, and Lily said, 'I hope you did not hurt yourself, Taddy, when you

gave that great jump just now;' and Taddy said: 'Thank you, Miss Lily, I am afraid you were the one that was hurt, but I hope you will forgive me, for I very much wished to have a chat with you this nice quiet evening. I really am quite tired of swimming about, and I find no pleasure at all in talking to my old aunts and uncles and cousins, or to my grandfather either, they are such cross croaking people; and the old gentleman is the most disagreeable of all, because he is so awfully conceited, and fancies himself quite the grandest person in our pond, and says that though that other frog, our great great great-grandfather, did burst, when he was showing the people that he was quite as big as the bull, that was only an accident, and that he, my grandfather, would undertake to prove to any one of us who had the time to wait and see, that he could puff himself out, and would swell and swell until he really would be as big as the bull. Now, as I am very small, and as I have a fine tail, which my relations have not, they are always

making fun of me, and if they don't laugh at me they scold me, and so I really get no peace at all. Therefore, it is quite delightful to sit and talk with you a little while, Miss Lily; but if you find me at all heavy or in your way, you just tell me to move, please, and I'll jump off at once.'

"'I am very glad of your company, Master Taddy,' said Miss Lily, who was always kind and gentle; 'and as I am not able to move about at all, I have rather a dull and lonely time, and am very pleased to get this chance of a chat with a friend.'

"'You don't mean to say you can't swim about when you like?' asked the tadpole, to whom so quiet a life seemed very dreadful.

"'No; I can't move away from the stem that holds me,' said the lily; 'it is only when that is broken that I float away from my sisters, and then I fade and die.'....

"'Oh! that is sad,' squeaked the tadpole, who

had not arrived at the age when his voice would change to a croak.

"'I don't think so,' said the lily. 'I have many friends, and though I can't go to them. still they come to see me, and that makes me glad. There is the sun with his warm bright smile, he wakes me every morning; and sometimes fresh sweet rain-drops fall upon my face and wash me; and there is a merry busy bee that often comes and asks me for a drink of honey, and buzzes and sings to me all the time it is drinking; and there are the merry restless butterflies, they flutter down on me sometimes, and seem to smile so brightly as they whisper to me about the gardens they have visited, where lovely flowers scent the air, and happy children laugh and play, and try to catch the butterflies too as they pass in their careless flight.'

"'I don't think the butterflies would be very merry if once they were caught by those children of whom you speak so kindly,' squeaked Taddy,

in a complaining tone; 'for my part, I once had the dire misfortune to get pulled up in one of those horrid wicked nets the boys dip into the water, and in which they try to catch us, and a more wretched time I never spent than that day. The boys shouted and danced for joy when they found they really had captured me, and they shrieked out to some friends of theirs who were the other side of the pond, "We've got a tadpole! a tadpole!" and all the time my heart was thumping with fear, and I was trembling all over, while I wondered if those cruel boys would stick a great dagger of a pin into me, as I have seen them do to the silly butterflies they have managed to catch in that other sort of muslin bag that they walk about with, which is as horrid a prison for flying creatures as the water-net is for us. I declare it quite makes my heart beat now, only to think of that terrible time.'

"'Oh! what troubles you must have been in, you poor dear little Taddy,' said the lily, quite

shivering as she thought of her companion's past dangers. 'Do tell me how you managed to escape.'

"'It was by a very lucky chance indeed,' said Taddy, who had become very serious as he was speaking of his trying adventures, 'and happened when I least expected to get away at all, for the more I wriggled about in the net, in which some blundering water-beetles and a few tiny fish had been caught too, the less chance there seemed of getting free, for the boy who was carrying me noticed the disturbance I made and gave a twist to the net which tied me and the others down so tight that we were forced to lie still.

"'Then we were packed so closely as to be almost crushed one against the other, and two of the tiny silver fish, which were very delicate, died in the struggle.

"'I suppose the boy walked round the pond to join his friends at the other side, for presently he stood still, and in a very eager tone told them of a!l the treasures he was carrying in that horrid net.

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""Oh, do show us the tadpole," said one of the boys; "Billy and I have never seen one."

""You must wait till we get home," answered my captor; "then I'll turn the whole lot out in a basin, and you can see them properly. They are so huddled up in the net, you couldn't tell one thing from another."

""But, Neddy, me dot a pwetty 'ittle pail here; do putten in me's pail, pease, pease."

"'I suppose it was a small toddling child which I saw afterwards that was asking to have us put in a pail for his pleasure, and we were all pleased enough at this chance, for any place must be better than that screwed-up net.

"'I am afraid I am tiring you, Miss Lily, Tadpole said suddenly. 'I feel you shaking under my weight.'

"'No, indeed; it is not your weight but the thought of your great danger that makes me tremble,' answered the lily; and added: 'Please

go on with your story. I long to know how you managed to get away at last.'

"'Well, it was thanks to little Billy,' said Tadpole, wagging his tail as he remembered this part of his adventure. 'Billy was so thoroughly delighted with my tail that he quite screamed for joy, and kept calling out, "Look at Tadpole's beauty tail!" until the big boys began to shout with laughter, at Billy's speech of course—not at me, you understand, Miss Lily.

"'The pail into which we had now been put was standing on the grass just at the edge of the pond; and Billy, who was quite amused with the laughter of the big boys as he had been with my handsome tail, began to dance and caper about, trying to shout as loudly as his big brothers, and his little feet were kicking about up and down, up and down, till, all at once, his toe touched the pail. Over it fell, out we all rolled, and, with the biggest jump I ever made in my life, I plumped back into the thick delicious mud of my own

pond. You may guess I was not long wriggling down into it, Miss Lily, and I took very good care, I can assure you, not to go near the top of the water again that day.'

"'I am so thankful you got away at last, you poor little Taddy,' said Lily kindly; and presently she added: 'I am sorry you don't like children; I have always loved to see their happy faces, and when any of them come to the edge of the pond, they smile so prettily, and stretch out their little hands for my sisters and me, and long to get at us and carry us away to their homes with them.'

"'Very likely; and when they had you there, they would fling you away, and let you die without even a drop of water to comfort you; that is how the children you admire would treat you, or any of us, for they don't really care about us; it is only because it amuses them that they fetch us out of our own comfortable homes and carry us away into the places they live in—humph!'

"In his great indignation Taddy actually managed to grunt quite like a grown-up frog, and the sound was so funny after the small squeak in which he had spoken before, that the gentle lily quite laughed, which made her tremble on her stem again. Then Taddy said:

"'Why, you are not frightened now, Miss Lily, are you?'

"'Oh no,' said the lily, 'I am only pleased; and at the same time I feel sorry you should think so badly of my little friends the children.'

"'Have you no other friends for whom I can care too?' asked Taddy, anxious to please the lily.

"'I don't know if you have ever seen my very best friend,' she said; 'if you have I am sure you must like him, and you would admire him too, as you seem to think so very much of a fine tail; for the friend I mean has a much handsomer tail than yours even.'

"As soon as he heard this, Master Tadpole gave a great spring, which sent him very far away from Miss Lily, and he began to wiggle and waggle about in the water in quite a furious fashion

"'I hope you are not vexed,' cried the lily; and then added joyfully: 'Here comes my beautiful friend, the water-wagtail; he will talk to you, Taddy, I am sure, because he is so good-tempered; he comes to see me every day, and then he tells me all the news he has heard as he flies through the wood and over the river. Won't you listen to what he has to say, Taddy?'

"But Taddy did not even answer, for he was very much offended when he found that the lily thought that it was possible that anyone could have a finer tail than his, so he wriggled right away to the farther end of the pond, and there hid himself in a bed of thick weeds, but though he was sulky and silent he was watchful all the time, and he kept his small bright eyes

fixed steadily on the opposite bank, where Mr. Water-wagtail was busily hopping to and fro, giving a jump or a spring as he moved from place to place, and wagging his hand-some feather tail as he merrily chatted to the lily.

"Taddy could not hear a word they were saying, but he knew by the wagtail's manner that he was amused, and it even seemed to that envious tadpole as if the lily were shaking with laughter again.

"Could they be laughing at him? he wondered and felt himself tremble with anger at this horrible idea. No, the lily was too gentle and kind to laugh at anyone, Taddy felt sure of that, and as for that conceited bird, well——! Taddy would bide his time, but it would not be long before he should prove to the lily's fine friend that others had tails to be proud of too, though they might not be dressed out in feathers.

"Tadpole, full of cross and envious thoughts'

spent a very uncomfortable night, and when at last he fell asleep, he dreamed that a peacock's tail of sweeping feathers, blue, gold, and green, had been added on to his own little waggling grav stump, and that he had hopped out upon the grass and along the pathway dragging this wondrous new tail after him, and flourishing it about before a small regiment of water-wagtails, who were drawn up in line to see the magnificent tadpole march past. Taddy awoke with a start. The hot morning sun was shining upon him with a beautiful bright light, and he got himself ready for a spring, intending to swim across the pond and have a nice chat with Miss Lily; but as he was preparing for a start his tail seemed to him to be very long and very heavy, and with a feeling that he was still dreaming, he tried to turn his bright eye back to make sure that those peacock's feathers, of which he felt the weight, were really there. . . . He did see that there was something added to his tail, not peacock's feathers, but a long daisy-chain, a number of golden-faced daisies all linked together by their stems, one of which had got twisted around Taddy's tail, and certainly made it appear of far more importance than ever before.

"'Oh ho!' squeaked Taddy; 'now surely that pretty Lily will think me much handsomer than her fine friend the conceited wagtail. I'll just bide my time, and as soon as ever I see him by the pond-side, coming to tell Lily all the news he has heard as he flew through the wood and along the river, I'll hop on to the grass and drag my fine tail along for him and Lily both to see. I'll never say an unkind word about children again, either,' thought Taddy, 'at least not about girls, for it's thanks to the little girls that came and sat by the pond-side and made wreaths and chains for their dolls yesterday, that I have caught up this beautiful

ornament which the little one threw into the water, not thinking at all what a splendid chance she was giving to "poor little Taddy."

"Though he called himself 'poor little Taddy, yet the tadpole really thought himself a very fine fellow, and so would you if you had seen him hopping along the pond-side, waggling his grand tail behind him and feeling quite as proud as the peacock himself. He saw Miss Lily raising her bright yellow face a bit to look at him as he passed, and presently, to his great satisfaction, he saw the wagtail too, who fluttered down upon the grass and stood jerking his tail up and down while he wished Miss Lily 'good-day!'

"'Now my turn has come,' thought Taddy, and gave his first spring, which brought him close to where Wagtail was standing, and as soon as ever the bird looked down on the ground, wondering what was passing over the grass just under his beak, Taddy felt that now he really was making a fine show, and jerked

himself on, Wagtail still eyeing those moving daisies in great astonishment. . . .

""They are daisies, and fine ones too,' thought the bird, and bent his head to peck at the golden centre of the modest little flowers. He gave a sharp dab with his strong beak; he held the daisy; he meant to break it from its stem, and lifted his head again with a jerk; but, alas! it was not the daisy's stem that snapped, but poor Mr. Tadpole's fine tail for Taddy's hour had come; his tail was off; and, instead of wiggling and waggling it in the muddy pondwater, he could now only hop and jerk—tail-less, like his quarrelsome relations the rest of the frogs."

* * * * *

"Bravo, bravo!" cried Harry, as Milly paused, quite out of breath after her long talking. "That's just the sort of story I like, Milly, and I'll undertake to bring you a new creature for your aquarium every time you'll tell us such a jolly story as that."

"So will I," said Frank, laughing.

" "And I will give you some tea now at once," said Aunt Ada, "for I'm quite sure you must want it after talking for nearly an hour."

CHAPTER VII.

I RECEIVE AN UNEXPECTED LETTER.

We had a very nice time at Hillport, Aunt Ada and all her children were very kind, and did all they possibly could think of to make the days pass pleasantly to my dear little mamma. Sometimes one or the other used to look at her as though they pitied her, but why I never could understand, for a merrier, brighter little girl never lived than Milly was. When Mabel was not at her lessons, Milly and she were always together, either working away in the girls' own garden, or making a new dress or bonnet for me, or copying some drawings Miss Day left for them, or playing and singing

duets, or—and this I know they both liked best of all—reading some book together and talking over the sayings and doings of the people they read about as though they were friends the girls knew quite well.

The boys used to trouble us a good deal, they would persist in teazing us; but Harry was far worse than Frank, whom his sisters used to call Daddy Longlegs. He was very awkward and a little shy, I think, especially when Milly was present, whom he evidently considered rather as a stranger; but Harry made no difference—he treated all his cousins, and, I think, his aunt too, in a very rough-and-ready manner, but he had such a merry kind face and voice and laugh, that we knew, with all his mischievous ways, he meant no harm, and no one could be angry with him long, even if his nonsense vexed them for a time.

One morning when Milly took me down to breakfast, Aunt Ada said:

"You have not looked in the letter-rack,

Milly, have you? There's something in it this morning for one of you."

"Oh, a letter from father, isn't it, auntie?" cried Milly, delighted.

"No, it's not for you at all, but for Miss Daisy."

Milly had stopped short on her way to the door when Aunt Ada first said, "No, not for you;" but she laughed again now, and ran out into the hall with me. There was my letter sure enough, and Milly read it aloud to Mabel and me, for Mabel was coming down the stairs at this minute. The letter was enclosed in a very tiny pink envelope, on which was written in a small clear hand:

"To MISS DAISY STEELE,

"Care of Miss Camilla Steele,

"The Manor Hall,

"Hillport, near London, W."

The letter was also written on pink paper, and began:

"MY DEAR DAISY,—I have just heard that you, too, have left Madame Bernersconi's at last, and are living with my dear little mother's cousin, Milly Steele. Aunt Ada has kindly invited us to come and see you all next week, and I want to tell you that we shall be very pleased to see you again, and Milly too. If there is anything we can get you or bring you from town, Mary hopes you will let us know in time. With best love from my mamma and myself to you and yours,

"I remain, dear Daisy,

"Your affectionate friend,

"ROSABELLA LEE."

Milly was delighted with this letter, and after talking to Aunt Ada about it she wrote the following reply for me:

"DEAR ROSABELLA,—As I never saw you except on the day Mary Lee carried you out

of the shop, when you were dressed in tissuepaper, I do not think I should have known you; but I have heard a great deal about you since from my little mother, and from your Uncle Harry too, who, I fear, is not always very kind to you, but who tells us that your mamma loves you very dearly. I am sure it will be very nice for us to meet, and there will be several things wanted which we hope Mary will bring when she comes down on Monday. Aunt Ada and the girls have contrived a surprise for your mamma and you, but as we are to tell you nothing about that, we can find no more to say to-day, only good-bye; and with best love from us all to all of you,

"I remain, affectionately yours,

"DAISY STEELE."

On the following Monday, Mary Lee did arrive, and I quite knew what my dear Milly had meant when she said that she had loved Mary next best to her papa—Mary was so gentle, so quiet, so helpful, and so wise.

She had a ready word and a willing hand to give to anyone who required comfort or assistance of any kind, and though she said but little at any time, yet her kind words, or her saving hand, often prevented a cross or rude speech from Harry, and kept him from seizing hold of me, or throwing me over as he often threatened to do, not wishing to hurt me. I am sure, but just to frighten my poor little mamma, who could not help crying out if she saw me in any sort of danger. I often wished Mary Lee could have come to Hillport just one day sooner, but that was Sunday, and of course she would not have chosen that day for her journey. Well, on that Sunday, something dreadful happened to me, which brought others into trouble too, and made Milly and me more unhappy than anything else that ever occurred while we were together.

In the morning, Aunt Ada, her daughters, her son, and the little visitors all went to church of course; and my little mamma, meaning to put me out of harm's way, laid me carefully upon the sofa in the drawing-room, having first wrapped me in a sheet of tissue-paper which Madame Bernersconi had told nurse was better for me than a silk or cotton handkerchief, as those were soft and clinging, and likely to rub the colour off my face, or pull my eyebrows or eyelashes away.

Nurse of course had told this to my dear little mamma, who always tried to take the very greatest care of me, and seemed to remember all nurse told her that was likely to keep me fresh and nice, for Milly was most anxious to prove to her papa, on his return, that she had treated me very tenderly for his dear sake as well as mine.

Well, I was lying carefully covered up on the sofa in the drawing-room, the girls were upstairs

reading, and Aunt Ada had gone to see a poor woman who was very ill and not expected to ive until the next day. It was a beautiful warm spring afternoon, the sun had been shining all the morning, making the air soft and pleasant. Aunt Ada had opened the windows of the room before she went out, and I could hear the bees and the flies humming their contented little hymns as they flew about over the lawn, and sipped the honey from the sweet spring flowers that grew on the beds just outside the drawing-room.

Perhaps I fell askeep while I was listening to these soothing sounds that make most people drowsy. Well, I don't know how that was, but I certainly was startled into sudden wakefulness by a shout from Harry, and an angry bark from Pepper, Henry's little terrier, which had been lately given to him by Aunt Ada, on condition that he never brought him into the house, as he was only a puppy, and did not

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know how to behave himself as all Aunt Ada's grown-up dogs did, who were trained to be quiet, clean, and obedient when they came into her rooms.

CHAPTER VIII.

A TERRIBLE DISASTER.

HARRY was playing on the lawn with Pepper, and as far as I could make out from the laughing and shouting and scuffling, Harry was teaching his puppy to fetch and carry. I suppose he had rolled up some paper into the shape of a ball, for when he bade Pepper "fetch," I heard a great tuzzling that sounded like a fight with a newspaper or a paper parcel.

Presently, whether by chance or to try a new exercise for his puppy, I don't know, but I certainly heard the paper ball roll on to the sofa on which I was lying, and felt it gently resting against my feet. In another instant, in far less

time indeed than it takes you to read this, Pepper, with a sudden bounce, was up on the sofa too, his scratchy paws grabbing about all over me, tearing the tissue-paper away; and then I felt his cold wet nose on my face, and after that his sharp teeth seized hold of my curls, and he bounded off the sofa, dragging me with him by the hair of my head, rushed out of the window, across the lawn, over the gravel, on and on, bumping, dragging, knocking me, tearing my clothes, and scratching my face, my arms, and legs in the most cruel manner.

Oh, that was a terrible time!... I could hear Harry running after us and shouting, "Pepp, give it up, lay it down, naughty Pepp, bad dog, wait till I catch you!" but that was just what Pepp did not mean to do, for the faster Harry ran, the more he shouted, the quicker did those quick sharp legs of Pepp's gallop along, and the worse were the bumps and bruises I got.

Suddenly a new and horrible sensation told

me that we had reached the stable-yard, for I was now being dragged over paving-stones. I felt that I lost a foot and an arm—they were both broken; then with a sudden plunge Pepper rushed into a bed of straw, and there dropped me, lying beside me, slobbering and panting, to await Master Harry's coming. When Harry did come he seized Pepper very roughly by the neck, dragged him out over the paving-stones, and there held him while he gave him a terrible whipping with a riding-cane he had just seized hold of. How Pepper cried; I only wished I could have asked Harry to leave off punishing the poor little beast that knew no better, and very likely (if it thought at all) fancied I enjoyed the run and the romp as much as he did.

As it was Sunday afternoon, neither of the grooms were about, because Aunt Ada liked her servants to have one day's thorough rest, so no one interfered with Harry, who went on whipping Pepper until his own arm ached, I suppose.

Having sent the poor puppy off with a final kick, Harry stooped over the kennel and lifted me out, touching me more gently and tenderly than he had ever done before. He carried me very carefully back into the drawing-room, laid me down on the sofa again, knelt beside me, and peered into my face with such a sad troubled look in his own that if I had only been able I must have laughed, and told him not to mind, poor fellow, for my face, though scratched, was not broken, and as for the arm and the leg, I knew how easily Madame Bernersconi would find new ones for me in what she called her "wax hospital"—a drawer all filled with new limbs and heads for broken dolls. Unfortunately I could say nothing to comfort Harry, whose face got more and more troubled when he found out that my leg was broken as well as my arm. As the stocking and shoe were still on the foot, he had not noticed this second misfortune until he began to examine me, tapping me all over with the tips of his fingers, as I have seen Madame Bernersconi doing to dolls that came back into hospital. I could see a big tear standing in each of Harry's blue eyes, which usually twinkled with fun and merriment.

At this moment Aunt Ada entered the drawing-room, coming in by the open window, and stood for a moment watching Harry, whose back was towards her, and who was still looking at me in great trouble.

"Good gracious, Harry boy, what has happened?" said Aunt Ada, when she stood close beside him.

"Oh, Auntie!" he cried, "how glad I am you're the first to see this—this poor creature;" and he pointed to me. "Oh, I am so awfully sorry, and I don't know what poor little Milly will say; she's such a good sort, too, and has never once told tales of me, though I've often and often seized her and worried her; but I'd rather have given up my best knife with the seven blades, or even that bad Pepper himself, than cause such trouble as this will be to that dear

old Mill, who wouldn't hurt a hair of anybody's head. I've got a good bit of money in my savings-box, auntie, if that's any good, and every farthing of it Milly shall have, or you, if you will get new arms and things for this unfortunate doll."

Harry was still kneeling on the floor; he had hidden his face in the folds of his aunt's dress, and he was really sobbing now.

"Tell me exactly how it all happened, Harry," said Aunt Ada, "the whole truth, mind; and first of all let me hear how you can explain your disobedience to me in coming into the house at all with your dog?"

Hastily brushing his tears away with the back of his hand, Harry stood up, and, looking straight into his aunt's face, told her exactly how the accident had happened.

Mrs. Steele listened attentively to every word he said, and then she told her nephew that he must go with her and tell his cousin of what had occurred, and ask her to forgive him.

I don't know what happened when Milly first heard of the trouble I had been in, and I am glad to think Aunt Ada saved my poor little mamma the pain of seeing me all scratched and bruised as I was, for she carried me away herself and locked me up in the wardrobe in her own room, and there I must have stayed some days, for when Aunt Ada came to take me out Mary Lee was standing by her side, and she took charge of me, and measured some new arms and legs for me which she had brought from town in a little box. The limbs were soon put on, and then Mary set to work with a very fine paintbrush, some red powder, and a sort of cream that was soft when she first used it, but got quite firm after she had put it on my face and left it to drv.

When Aunt Ada came back into the room and saw what Mary had done, she said: "Why, Mary, you are quite an artist, and when all trades fail you had better join Madame Bernersconi, for you manage to make old faces look like new



"Mary set to work with a paint-brush"-p. 108

ones, which is certainly a most desirable accomplishment and a very rare one."

There was a tap at the bedroom-door, and Mabel said:

"Please may I come in?"

Her mamma asked her if she was alone, and she replied, "Oh yes; Ethel and Milly are so busy with Rosabella, they won't miss me at all."

"I have brought Daisy's party-dress to try on for her," she added, as she came up to Mary, who was still holding me on her lap. "I want Daisy to wear it to-morrow, when she expects company at tea."

"I can tell you if it will fit her," said Mary, "without putting it over her head just now, for I am not sure that the paint is quite dry. I am well used to trying on dolls' clothes, as Rosabella could tell you."

I saw the dress, which was of white net and trimmed with dear little daisies, of which Mabel had arranged a wreath for my hair. Mary had brushed my curls and put something on them to make them smooth and glossy again, and Mabel declared that I looked "quite as nice as ever."

"Do let me fetch poor Harry to see her," she said; "I don't believe he has smiled once since his trouble on Sunday; and we should all like him to have poor little Pepper back again, who looks as miserable, shut up in the stable, as his master does in the house."

"Harry may come," said Aunt Ada; "but he shall not have Pepper back until he has proved that he can keep the dog out of mischief."

Mabel ran away to fetch her cousin, who presently came back with her, looking very unhappy, and speaking in a low tone as if he was ashamed, instead of shouting merrily as he used to do. I don't know what punishment his aunt had given him besides taking Pepper away, but he certainly looked and behaved like a very

different boy to the madcap Harry, who used to make the whole house lively with his laughter and his jokes. He came close to Mary, who held me up for his inspection, and as he looked at me, something like a smile came back into his bonny face.

"Oh, Mary, what a regular trump you are," he cried, flung his arms around his sister's neck, and kissed her heartily; "why, the creature looks better than ever she did, I declare; oh dear, how awful she was on Sunday; why, the black ghost in Punch and Judy is quite a beauty to the fright Pepper made of poor Milly's pet. I've got her something with the money that was left after you paid for her arms and all that. I went up to town on purpose—I made the groom take me when he went in the gig to do auntie's commissions yesterday. Look here, isn't that jolly?"

He held up a little leather box, that looked like a trunk. "That's a doll's dressing-case,"

he said; "Milly shall show you what's inside; and look, I have had 'Daisy' put on it in gold letters. Isn't that pretty? And here at the bottom is a drawer for the doll's jewellery, and here is a set complete, all blue beads. The woman in the shop said they were 'imitation turquoise.' I thought she said turkeys at first, and that she was gammoning me. Look! brooch, earrings, bracelet, and necklet! Do you think Milly will like them?"

"I am quite sure she will, dear old Harry," cried Mabel; and Mary added: "She will be so pleased, I know, to find you have tried to give her pleasure, besides liking the jewellery."

"She has invited me to her tea-party tomorrow, which is more than I ever expected," said Harry; "and I did beg Frank to say we couldn't come, as there'll be cricket on the common to-morrow; but since I've seen your fine mendings, Mary, I'd like to come to Milly's party, and I won't worry anybody the least bit, and I won't touch the dolls at all; I'll only take Milly my little present; and oh, how glad I shall be to see her hugging her beloved Daisy again, for she has seemed so lonely without her all the week, I could not bear to go near her at all."

CHAPTER IX.

MILLY GIVES A DOLLS' TEA-PARTY.

THE next morning there was great excitement in the Manor Hall, for though I was still locked up in Aunt Ada's wardrobe, among all her laces and finery, with sprays of sweet-scented lavender lying close to me, and a soft Indian shawl for my bed, I could hear many feet running up and down the stairs and along the passages, and I could hear Harry's voice shouting in his old merry tones; and now and then I heard my dear little mamma's laugh, or heard her call to Effie or Mabel or Frank. At one o'clock the great bell summoned everybody to luncheon

and oh, how I longed to be taken out and downstairs too, to see and hear all that was going on, and better still, to be with my own dear Milly again, whom I had not seen for such a very long time now.

After luncheon all seemed to be quieter in the house, and though I listened eagerly I could not catch a sound of Milly's voice, or even of Harry's, but after an hour or two I heard wheels on the carriage-drive in front of the house, and presently there were some loud peals from the visitors' bell. The guests for Milly's party were evidently arriving in good time.

After waiting for what seemed several hours to me, Mabel and Mary came up together and took me out of my lavender-scented prison. Mary dressed me in my lovely white dress and fastened the wreath on my hair, and then Mary took me on her arm, and taking hold of Harry's hand, who was waiting for her at the door of auntie's bedroom, Mary went down into the

hall with us. Here the carpet had been taken up, the furniture moved away, and many of Mrs. Steele's beautiful flowering plants were placed on stands; a great fire of fine sputtering logs was blazing in the huge open grate, and at the farther end of the hall a long low table was set out with Mabel's own china tea-set, and around the table small chairs were placed and a few stools, the chairs being intended for the dolls and the stools for their mammas, who did not require arms or backs to keep them from falling over as we always do. Three dolls were already seated when Mary brought me down; and oh, how delighted I was to see my dear old baby friend from Madame Bernersconi's and her sailor brother beside her; and presently I recognised Rosabella too, who was dressed in white muslin just as I was, only that the flowers she wore were tiny pink roses instead of daisies. We could not talk aloud, but we looked at one and another: and Rosabella, in our silent language, made

me understand that Mabel and Mary had dressed her, too, as a surprise for her little mamma.

When Mary had settled me in my chair, Harry stooped over me, and put the neat little leather dressing-case on my lap, and then we sat waiting. There were four other dolls besides those I have mentioned, which belonged to some of the young friends whom Aunt Ada had invited to meet her little nieces, and Rosabella and me.

The baby and the sailor "Jack" let me know that they had only just left Madame Bernersconi's, and that Mrs. Steele had fetched them on the previous day, though they did not know to whom they were to be given.

We were not long in doubt, for presently Aunt Ada entered the hall with Mr. and Mrs. Lee, a troop of children following them. Among these were Ethel and the dear little twins, Lolo and Lalla, to whom kind Aunt Ada presently gave the baby and Jack, for it was the twins' birthday, the 1st of May, and they were three years old, and had both wished for a dolly!

Oh! how delighted they seemed to be, Lalla shouting:

"Now me got anoder 'ittle brudder—'ittle brudder Jack," and Lolo crowing and chuckling like a little bantam.

"Me got anoder Lalla, too; me love her ever so much—a 'ittle darling lamb!" hearing which all the children present laughed aloud, and Lolo hid his sweet baby face in sister Mary's gown.

Milly was so taken up in watching her dear little cousins that she had not even seen me; but when Lolo and Lalla marched away, each hugging the lovely new doll Aunt Ada had given them, Harry came softly to Milly's side and whispered to her:

"Mary has done your Daisy up, Milly dear, and I think you'll be pleased to have her back; and I have bought her a little dressing-case, which I hope you'll like." Milly just glanced at me, and then she turned quickly back to her cousin, and having kissed him heartily:

"Oh, Harry," she cried, "my Daisy is sweeter than ever; it's like having her given to me a second time, only of course I love her much better now than I could at first, when I didn't really know her."

And now Milly took me into her arms again and hugged and kissed me, and called me all manner of fond names, and sweet Ethel Lee came and talked to me and showed me to Rosabella; and then the other little mammas came up, and each took her doll from those sitting at the tea-table, and so we heard all their names, and until Aunt Ada said:

. "Now, Miss Milly, how much longer are you going to keep your guests without their tea?"

So Milly sat on a stool at the head of the table, having me close by her side you may be sure, and Ethel sat at the other end with Rosabella beside her, and long-legged Frank, who was too big to sit on any of the stools, had to kneel down, and choose his place between Ethel and Rosabella, while Harry, who did not think he could sit on a stool if Frank could not, came up to our end, and kneeling down, asked Milly if she would make a wee bit of room for him between herself and me.

Milly did not much like to part from me I knew, but she particularly wished to show Harry that she had not a single unkind thought of him in her mind; so she put me a little on one side, and Harry knelt down between us, but as he was a short stout little fellow, he would have been much better off

on a stool, for as it was, he could hardly reach the table, whereas Frank towered over it like a giant.

I noticed all tea-time that Harry was most careful not to touch me or knock me over; and he offered me cake and biscuits and buns and bread-and-jam, saying each time, "May I have the honour, Miss Daisy, to offer you a slice?" or, "Will you permit me to have the pleasure of passing your plate?" all of which the little children seemed to think very funny, for they laughed heartily at Harry's speeches.

When the tea was finished, and all the little busy mouths that had been munching away at the many good things provided for them were at rest again, Aunt Ada proposed a good game.

"Give me all the precious wax children," said Mary Lee; and the dolls were handed to her one by one, excepting the baby and Jack, which Lolo and Lalla said they could

not give up. However, when Hunt-the-slipper was proposed, and the girls and boys seated themselves on the floor in a merry circle, Lolo and Lalla, being told they could not play unless they gave up their dolls for a time, handed their precious new treasures to Mary, who seated us all in a row on the high mantelshelf, where we were quite out of harm's way and beyond the reach of any of the little fingers.

It was very nice for us to sit up there, and look on at the merry games the children were enjoying; Aunt Ada, Mrs. Lee, and Mary all helping to keep the slipper moving, and to make the children laugh with their merry jokes and funny speeches.

After Hunt-the-slipper, Blindman's Buff was proposed, at which game Frank and Harry both got so noisy and wild, that Mrs. Lee soon said "that was enough," and proposed to play some pretty dance music, so that the elder

children could have a galop and a polka, and the little ones a romp.

I think they *all* romped; they certainly all enjoyed themselves until Mr. Lee stopped them by saying:

"Young ladies and gentlemen, or rather, my dear little friends, girls and boys too, I have been asked to contribute to your entertainment this evening. My sister has given you her rooms to play in; my wife has been providing some merry music; you have all of you brought happy faces and happy laughter, plenty of good temper and quick dancing feet; and as my share in your amusement, I have invited Mr. Punch and Mrs. Judy, the precious baby and the wise dog Toby, who will have the honour of appearing before you. and hope to please you with an entertainment of their own. If you will kindly all be seated upon the rugs Mabel and Frank will now lay down, I will let Mr. Punch know as soon as you are quite ready to receive him and his party."

Clapping of hands and glad cheering followed this speech of Mr. Lee's, and you may be sure the children lost no time in seating themselves on the rugs as soon as these were spread on the floor for them. Mary and Mabel arranged them all in rows, and kept them from crowding one another, and took care that the tall ones kept at the back, so that the little ones could see nicely.

And presently Mr. Lee, who had left the hall, entered it again by the conservatory door at the other end, and was followed by a sort of walking-house, the legs of which were hidden in a loose gown of blue and white checked cotton. The house was the theatre, and the cotton gown covered up the man who carried it.

I suppose all of you who read this book have seen that wonderful Punch and Judy performance at one time or another, but I don't suppose that all of you have seen such a wonderfully clever pretty little dog Toby as the one that barked, and jumped, and acted, and all but spoke, at Hillport on that 1st of May.

Harry was so delighted with that clever little black-nosed Toby, that he kept calling out: "Oh! isn't he a jolly pup? Did anyone ever see such a little trump as that?"

And Lolo, who evidently thought it his business to echo his dear "Haddy brudder's" remarks, piped all Harry said in his sweet baby prattle, to the great satisfaction of himself and all the listeners. Lalla did not quite approve of the ghost and the hangman, but Lolo laughed and told her: "Why, it's only a 'dolly dosha,' and not a haddy man," until she began to laugh too.

When the Punch and Judy performance was over the children had another dance, and after that supper was brought in, and a great deal of fresh fun enjoyed when the *bonbons* were placed on the table, and every boy told to "take two, present to a lady, and—fire!"

Lalla did not like the "shooting" at all, and went away to sit on her mamma's lap, but Lolo, seeing how Harry enjoyed the crackers, begged to be allowed to "fie fie the duns too," and crowed with pleasure when his wee fists had actually pulled so successfully at one end of the cracker that it went off with a "pop." Byeight o'clock all the children who were not · staying at Mrs. Steele's had left, and then Milly and Ethel, Lolo, Lalla, and Frank went into Aunt Ada's workroom, where she was sitting and reading by the light of a shaded lamp. Milly was carrying me, of course, and so I heard what took place. Aunt Ada looked surprised when, in answer to the "Come in" with which she replied to Milly's gentle knock, we all entered the room like a little procession.

"What can I do for this crowd of ambassadors?" asked Aunt Ada, and added, smiling: "Pray tell me, Master Lolo, on what mission you have done me the honour to seek me?"

"Me done no honour nor nuffin naughty," said Lolo stoutly, and looking gravely into his aunt's face, who could hardly repress a smile, "but it's birfday for Lalla and me, and so don't say 'no;' we comed to ask, dear Auntie Ada, to dive Pepp back to our dear Haddy brudder boy."

Lolo was very serious, and spoke his words slowly one by one, as if they made a difficult lesson, but he had learnt it, and could say it perfectly too, and when Lalla and he together cried, "Oh, please, please auntie, dear, don't say no," and Milly and Ethel joined in the entreaty, it was no wonder Aunt Ada snatched the twins up and hugged and kissed them, and said: "Well, as it's your birfday, you coaxing wee babes, I cannot say 'no,' and Haddy brudder shall have his Pepper back again—on trust."

Hearing this, Lolo darted off his aunt's lap, and running into the hall, shouted out: "Haddy, come quickly, quickly, do, and 'oo shall have 'oo's Pepper back again—on loast!"

CHAPTER X.

MILLY AND I GO HOME AGAIN.

Lolo's delight, when Milly and he led Pepper back to Harry before breakfast next morning, was as great as that of his brother and of the little yelping frolicsome pup. Jack, the sailor doll, was handed over to sister Effie, for Lolo had no time, no eyes, and no hands to spare for anything but "beaufulnest Pepp," and the dog took to the baby-boy, as if he quite understood it was to him he owed his release from that lonely week in the stable; but Pepper did not like Lalla, and ran away from her, and she in her turn was not quite happy if the dog was

near her. As for Rosabella or me, if Pepper caught sight of us he dropped his tail and whined, and ran away to hide himself under the garden-seat or under the low evergreens—anywhere to get away from us, thinking no doubt that his punishment was my fault, poor little beast.

The 2nd of May being as sunny and warm as the 1st, auntie said she should take all her little party out for a drive in the waggonette. It was still too chilly to picnic out of doors, and the ground too damp to spread out luncheon on the grass; but the boys should light a fire of sticks, the kettle should be put on to boil, tea made out-of-doors. bread-and-butter and cake taken in a basket. and a hamper with mugs and spoons, a teapot, and a bottle of milk, etc. You may imagine the delight the children showed when Aunt Ada told them of her plans, and how happily they drove away to a fine old wood called Burnham Beeches, and how thoroughly

they enjoyed their "standing tea," for auntie allowed no one to sit on the damp ground; and how tired they all were when they came back to us dollies, who had been left on the mantelshelf in the hall as being out of harm's way there. Lolo and Lalla had both gone fast to sleep on the drive home, and were now carried in and straight upstairs by Mary Lee and their nurse; but even as little Lolo was carried past me, he said in his sleep:

"Beau-ful-nest Pepp, fets-fets it-do."

The little Lees remained a week at Hillport, and then their parents came to fetch them home, for Harry had to go back to school, and Ethel's governess was complaining at her pupil's long absence, so I heard Mary tell her sister, who said, "Oh, she is a horrid cross old bother;" and if it hadn't been that Ethel laughed as she said it, I should have been very sorry, for I am sure that the little girls are far more "bother" to their governesses

than those who so kindly and patiently teach them can ever be. Mabel and Ethel and Milly made many plans for the midsummer holidays, for Aunt Ada had invited all her nephews and nieces to Hillport then, and help to make hay in her meadows.

Still, even all the pleasure of looking forward to that glorious time did not quite make up for the trouble and sorrow of parting now; and the little girls were not the only ones who shed tears as they said goodbye again and again. Harry, though he tried to make out he had got something in his throat, that choked him and made his eyes water, was really endeavouring to swallow his tears, which must have been very salt, to judge by the wry faces he made. Frank coughed, too, and used his handkerchief very roughly, rubbing his nose till it looked quite red, and saying what a nuisance a cold in the head was. Harry kissed Milly most lovingly, and told her until he knew her he never believed a girl could be "such a regular brick" as she had shown herself; and I am sure he meant to say something very nice, though I can't think how he found soft smiling little Milly was like "a brick." However, his speech made her laugh, in spite of the good-bye tears; and she laughed still more when he stood up on his toes, and then bent over to kiss me with the very tips of his lips barely touching me.

"Because I always feel as if she was made of butter, and must melt away," he said.

How quiet the house was when all the Lees had gone, and how sorry Milly was when she came up to bed, and there was neither Ethel nor Rosabella to be undressed and talked to, as had been their great amusement during the past week, when we all undressed in one of the spare rooms together before

going off to our own little beds for the night.

Perhaps Mabel guessed that Milly felt lonely, for just after my little mamma had knelt down to say her prayers, Mabel came very softly into her room, and knelt down beside her cousin, and they prayed together; and just as Mabel was going to rise Milly said:

"Help me to say another little prayer, dear May, for my dear new mamma, to whom I want to be a very good little daughter, as well as to dear, dear father."

Next morning Aunt Ada had her ponycarriage brought out in good time, and by eleven o'clock Milly and I drove up to the hall-door at home.

"Coachman has just had a telegram from the master," said nurse, who had run out to meet us, and was lifting Milly and me out; "and your dear ma and pa will be here by twelve o'clock, miss," nurse added eagerly, "for coachman has put the horses to, and is going off to Ealing station now to meet the down-train from town."

For one minute I think Milly forgot everyone and everything, in her surprise and delight at hearing that she would so soon be able to welcome her dear papa home again, from whom she had never before been parted for more than a day at a time. The carriage soon started away, and Aunt Ada ordered her ponies to be taken out and put into the stable for a time.

"We won't stand waiting here, Milly darling," said auntie, who was never happy unless she was busy about something; "take me into your garden, and I'll see what you have done for it, and what I can do for it. I'll give you some advice to-day, and the next time the groom comes over he shall bring you some seeds, and some slips, and some cuttings, and perhaps a pretty plant or two, to make your flower-beds

look gay, now that the summer is really coming."

When Aunt Ada set about a thing she always did it thoroughly, and she was soon kneeling on the gravel, her sleeves tucked back, her skirts gathered into a bunch behind, weeding and planning and arranging, putting little sticks into the ground, and tving creepers to them to show where seeds had been put in; and Milly was so interested in listening to and watching her aunt that neither of them noticed how the time went by, and both were startled when they heard a carriage drive up to and stop at our front door. Milly rushed away in an instant, holding me tightly in her arms, and in another minute we were both lifted high in the air, and then taken close, quite close, into the loving embrace of Milly's dear, dear father, General Steele.

How well I remembered his handsome face, his kind eyes, and long gray beard, and how nice it was to see that pleasant smile again, which I had thought so bright, when I looked at him from out of Madame Bernersconi's show-case.

"Isn't our darling looking well?" he said, as Milly's mamma bent down to kiss her little daughter.

"Your auntie has certainly taken very good care of you and of Miss Dolly too, I should think," said Mrs. Steele; and then the General said:

"I had hoped to find auntie here to-day."

"And you are not to be disappointed, brother," said Aunt Ada, coming up to the door at this moment; "and I must tell you both, my dears, that if ever you feel inclined to go off holiday-making for a month or two, you can always send this dear little trot and her dolly over to Hillport, for two happier, better-behaved little ladies I have never had the good fortune to meet."

"Is that so?" said a lady who had just

entered the garden-gate, and now came up to the hall-door too, where we were all standing.

"Yes, Auntie Bee," replied Aunt Ada, smiling, "and it really was a very great pity that you were unable to come to us at Hillport last week, for there were such feastings and rejoicings—a Punch and Judy show, a dolls' tea-party, no end of games—indeed, it was as if the Christmas holidays had fallen in 'the merrie month of Maye' this year. I believe you would have been so pleased with the young people's festivities and with the exhibition of dolls, that you would at once have written another story about it all, to please the many little friends who have so anxiously been asking for another book about *Dolls*."

"Very well, Ada," said Auntie Bee, laughing; "if that be so, the little friends shall soon be gratified, for if you and Milly and (what is this wax pet's name—Daisy?) will take the trouble

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to tell me all about these fine games, and parties, and any other of your doings here or at Hillport, I will try and put it all into a book again, and then those who like may for themselves read about

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